

Message Text

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15

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 FEA-02

DRC-01 TRSE-00 OMB-01 INT-08 /127 W
----- 120359

R 110755Z FEB 74

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 2480

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0079

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ECON, ET

SUBJECT: PETROLEUM TRUCKERS STRIKE IN ERITREA

REF: ASMARA 0062

1. THE TRUCKERS STRIKE CONTINUES DESPITE EFFORTS TO SETTLE IT PRIOR TO THE EMPEROR'S ARRIVAL. SHELL TRUCKERS JOINED STRIKE DURING LAST WEEK. THE GOVT. ISSUED AN ULTIMATUM ON FEB. 8 TO TRUCKERS TO RESUME TRANSPORTING, OR RISK THREAT OF ARREST AND CONFISCATION OF TRUCKS. ON MORNING OF FEB. 11 TRUCKERS STILL ON STRIKE. HOWEVER, THEY AGREED TO SUPPLY SEDAO AND THE ARMED FORCES. GAS STATIONS ARE SELLING GAS ONLY TO PREFERRED CUSTOMERS ON A RATIONED BASIS. SOME SMALL FACTORIES ARE CLOSING DUE TO A LACK OF FUEL.

2. ACCORDING TO ASST. GOVGEN YASIN ABERRA, TRUCKERS RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT COOLING OFF PERIOD TO GIVE GOVT. TIME TO STUDY PROBLEM. WHEN SIMILAR CRISIS AROSE SEVERAL YEARS AGO, GOVT. STUDY LASTED A COUPLE OF YEARS WITH NO INCREASE IN RATES.

3. TRUCKERS BELIEVE RATE INCREASE NECESSARY TO PAY FOR INCREASE IN PETROL AND SPARE PARTS. MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
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WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY RAISING RATES ONLY IN ERITREA. GENERAL

RATE INCREASE WOULD FEED INFLATION THROUGHOUT EMPIRE. SEDAO
PRESENTLY APPLYING FOR INCREASED RATES FOR ELECTRICITY.
BUSINESSES WILL WANT TO PASS ON COST OF HIGHER ELCTRICITY TO
CONSUMER.

4. LOCAL GOVT. OFFICIALS, OIL COMPANY REPS, AND TRUCKERS HOPE
THAT HIM WILL AUTHORIZE CONCESSIONS TO END THE STRIKE. WHILE
THE IEG HAS THE AUTHORITY TO CONFISCATE TRUCKS, AND THE
MANPOWER TO DRIVE THEM, SUCH A MOVE WOULD BE POLITICALLY
UNFEASIBLE IN LIGHT OF LOCAL POLITIAL PROBLEMS.
RABIDA

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